

AMBS alumni news

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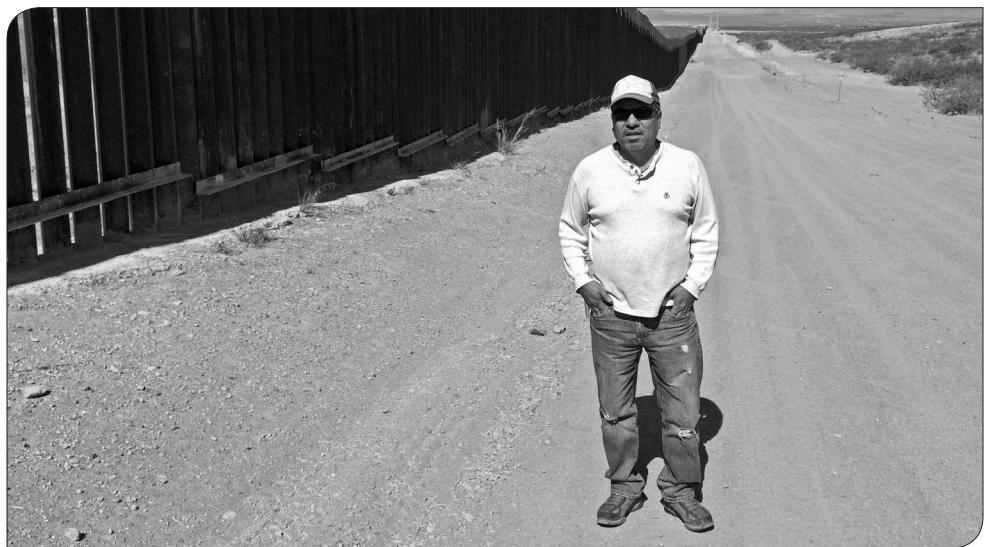
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My son-in-law is a Mexican immigrant living in Elkhart without papers for more than 15 years. Leaving home and family behind to try to make a new life, he has coped with the traumatic change by immersing himself in the local Hispanic community. His understanding and insight into that community is revelatory to an outsider like me, and comforting to him, but it's also an insular group into which its members often retreat.

Our congregations can be like that, too, and as congregations like mine minister to immigrants, we may be inviting them to leave one insular community for another. To the degree this happens, everyone involved is frustrated, and we all miss out on the new humanity Jesus creates. Is the problem ministering to rather than ministering with immigrants? If the humanity Jesus creates really is new, ministering with immigrants means we all acknowledge that everyone comes to it as an immigrant. Let us all come, longing to be called out of our insular communities to be built into a dwelling place for God who is redeeming all of creation.

— Brent Eash, chair of the AMBS Alumni Association

MINISTRY WITH AND FOR IMMIGRANTS



Holy land, a transformative path Jorge Vielman (MAPS 2001)

In early summer 2014 I had the opportunity with other Mennonite Central Committee coworkers and constituents to participate in a walk through the Arizona desert (The Migrant Trail: We Walk for Life). Over seven days we walked 75 miles from Agua Prieta, Mexico, to Tucson, Ariz. Our main goal was to educate people about the prevention of deaths in the desert.

The walk for me was a transformative experience. By walking in the desert I felt like I was in holy land; holy because it reminded me that it was there in the desert where Jesus spent 40 days and in his humanity he was challenged. I was there for only seven days, being confronted with mixed feelings about what immigrants experience and the hardships they endure in such journey. The desert is a place where the person is vulnerable to the danger of being abused by those who bring them, being abandoned by their companions, and

even death. In the desert is where they find their faith and some, if not all, discover their dependency on God.

Our immigrant brothers and sisters would like to be welcomed and helped so they can find solace in the new land. Immigrants who are also under our God's grace deserve our shalom. I was transformed by the faith of my immigrant brothers and sisters and their commitment to keep their families together, safe and in pursuit of a better life for all their loved ones.

The Arizona desert became my holy land, the path that transformed my thinking, increased my faith and renewed my passion for justice for those families whose loved ones have been lost in the desert. It increased my desire to advocate for those who live in the shadows and be a voice for those who are suffering but are afraid to talk or look for help.

Jorge Vielman is on the staff of Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes, Goshen, Ind. ●

Jorge Vielman stands next to the wall dividing Mexico from the U.S. during the Migrant Trail: We Walk for Life experience in summer 2014.

Ministry with and for immigrants (continued)

Connecting in friendship Tina Schlabach (MDiv 2003)

Soon after our family's move to Tucson, Ariz., the summer of 2012, I began participating in the Wednesday open community meals of Casa Mariposa.

Since that first potluck dinner with this intergenerational, interfaith, committed group of people, I have become increasingly involved with the Restoration Project of Casa Mariposa, which is work carried out in support and solidarity with women and men being held in immigration detention centers in Florence and Eloy, Ariz.

I drive an hour north with others to the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) Detention Center in Eloy, where several thousand migrants from many countries are in custody. For-profit prisons such as this one are economically part of our current crisis of mass incarceration of people of color in the U.S., and they benefit at the expense of family unity, human rights and due process (for more on this issue, see detentionwatchnetwork.org).

I visit women from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico who came to the U.S., fleeing domestic abuse, gang extortion and/or violence, or in the hopes of earning money to send to their impoverished families back home. These women, who live in detention prison for many months, are representing themselves in front of immigration judges, fighting their deportation orders on appeal after appeal.

Our visits remind these women that they are not forgotten and that we can

connect as women in friendship, sharing from our lives and helping as we are able. I know without doubt that God is very much at work in this detention center, giving strength to women who are leaning on their faith to get through each day, praying to reunite with their families and for the chance to create a better life.

"Carry each other's burdens ..." Marvin Dueck (MDiv 1988)

When people ask me, what are you doing these days?, I respond by saying that I continue to serve and work with Low German Mennonite newcomers to Canada from Latin America, primarily from Mexico.

Before moving to Elkhart to attend AMBS in 1986, Audrey and I spent four years in Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua, Mexico. There we served as Bible school and Junior High school teachers with young people whose parents wanted their children to have a "better" education than they would otherwise receive in a village school. Low German-speaking Mennonites had first moved to Mexico from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada, in the early 1920s in an effort to preserve a way of life which they felt was being threatened.

In August of 1988, after graduating from AMBS, Audrey and I moved to

Leamington, Ont., in order to begin an assignment with Mennonite Central Committee Ontario. The assignment was to start a Help Centre in Chatham, Ont., for Low German Mennonite newcomers who were moving from Mexico to southern Ontario in search of a brighter economic future.

When Low German Mennonite newcomers arrive in Canada they are vulnerable due to language barriers, culture shock, isolation, loneliness and powerlessness. In the past 26 years I have been involved in helping Low German Mennonite newcomers attain status as citizens or permanent residents of Canada, and access educational options, employment, health and social services.

Several years ago I completed the necessary requirements to become a "Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant." Each day when I arrive at my office, located in Leamington, I thank God for the privilege of serving newcomers to Canada. Most of my interactions are in the Low German language. Each encounter opens a door to the possibility of a deeper and mutually transformative relationship. Paul's words in Galatians 6:2 are an ongoing encouragement, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." ●

Pastors Week: Challenge for the church



Jason Bryant

Answering the Pastors Week question "What is an Anabaptist Christian?", Elizabeth Soto Albrecht (student 1984–85) said, "Anabaptism is not a denomination. It is movement of the Spirit. We cannot hold it or capture it; we cannot even own it. We strive to be a community of believers." She and other presenters challenged ethnic Mennonites to trust God more fully and let go of traditional culture and power to embrace what God is doing among Anabaptists and neo-Anabaptists. The other four presenters were Janet Plenert (MATS 2007), Greg Boyd, Drew Hart and David B. Miller (MDiv 1992). Visit www.ambs.edu/news-events/iTunesU.cfm to listen to recordings of presentations and sermons from the Jan 26–29 event. ●

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Listen to audio recordings of recent events: www.ambs.edu/news-events/iTunesU.cfm

ALUMNI NEWS NOTES

Nekisha Alayna Alexis (MATS 2008) published an essay in *A Faith Encompassing All Creation: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions about Christian Care for the Environment* (Cascade Books, 2014). In her essay, "Isn't All of Creation Violent?" she addresses the perspective that the fact of violence in creation limits the possibilities of Christian peacemaking with other animals.

Jeff Hochstetler (MDiv 2014) was installed as family life pastor at Berlin (Ohio) Mennonite Church, September 28.

Daniel Liechty (MAPS 1978), professor of social work at Illinois State University, was invited to serve as a founding board member for the Victim Offender Restoration Program (VORP) of McLean County.

He also serves on the ethics commission of the McLean County Board of Supervisors.

Titus Oyejemi (MAPS 2003) has published a new book, *Evaluating Peace Education: A Study of Nigerian Jr. Secondary Schools*, available from Lambert Academic Publishing. In 2012, Titus published *Equipping the New African Peacebuilder*.

Joon Park (MDiv 2013) and Shim Beach have accepted an assignment with Mennonite Church Canada Witness to be mission workers in China, beginning in August 2015. The Chinese government is currently deporting many foreign workers, so this makes the future of mission work very uncertain. Joon and Shim request prayers for discernment and God's guidance during their preparation.

Lois Siemens (MDiv 2006)

and April Yamasaki created a weekly calendar, "My Sacred Pauses daybook 2015." It combines spiritual practices for personal renewal with images. They used April's book *Sacred Pauses* for quotes, journal ideas and themes; Lois contributed images and a weekly mini-challenge.

Rick Stoner (MAME 2009)

was installed as pastor at Sharon Mennonite Church, Plain City, Ohio, September 7.

Deaths

Everett John to **Eric Vandrick (MATS 2014, bookstore manager)** and **Linsey Vandrick (receptionist)** on January 20, 2015.

Sherri Martin-Carman (MDiv 1998) and James Martin-Carman have announced that Justin (age 14) and Caleb (age 11) joined their family by adoption, becoming official on August 18, 2014.

Deaths

Peter Derksen (MDiv 1972) died November 15, 2014. Peter and Mary, his wife, were missionaries in Japan from 1954 to 1999.

Peter Retzlaff (BD 1967) died January 16. Peter was a pastor in several states and provinces as well as serving in denominational leadership. ●

BENEFITS DESIGNED FOR ALUMNI

Alumni access to full text theological journals online

AMBS alumni (people with 12 or more credit hours) have free online access to articles in more than 250 journals and magazines in the ATLASerials database. Titles include *Interpretation*, *Christianity Today*, *Christian Century*, *Journal for Preachers*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* and *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*.

The complete list of titles is on the website of the American Theological Library Association (Use this short URL: <http://bit.ly/1uyI0ep>)

Carrie Martens (MDiv 2011), Pastor of Faith Formation at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., recently surprised the library staff with this tribute:

I just wanted to write a thank you, as I sit at my computer preparing a sermon for Sunday. Frequently I look at my own library, which is still quite small as a newer pastor, and wish I had more resources. Then I remember that I can access ATLA and I rejoice! Numerous sermons have benefited from solid scholarship that I would not have had access to without the generous gift that AMBS offers its alumni.

AMBS pays about \$1,000 per year to provide alumni access to ATLASerials. A user I.D. and password are required to search and read articles. To receive the account information, please email Eileen Saner (esaner@ambs.edu) or use the "Ask a Librarian" link on the library home page: www.ambs.edu/library/ Include the date of your degree or the years when you took classes at AMBS.

ATLASerials is only one resource featured in a library guide provided specifically for AMBS alumni. For more resources, visit <http://libraryguides.ambs.edu/alumni>. The guide also includes a link to *The Text This Week*, a comprehensive resource for worship and preaching. In *The Text This Week*, weekly lectionary texts are linked to full-text articles in ATLASerials. ●

Encourage someone to visit AMBS ... get a discount for yourself

Two Seminary Preview Days are set for spring: March 27 and April 24. It's the best time for someone to visit AMBS with opportunities to meet faculty and students, sit in on classes and chapel, and learn about study on campus and at a distance.

Visitors can register at www.ambs.edu/visitAMBS

If you encourage someone to attend, and he or she comes (for a Preview Day or another time), **we will give you a discount on selected Church Leadership Center offerings**. These include Pastors Week, webinars and workshops.

This double-benefit effort comes because we know that people who are encouraged to attend seminary by someone they know are much more likely to pursue study. Also, anyone who has visited campus is much more likely to come for study.

Your role is essential in helping the next generation of pastors and church leaders listen for God's call. Thank you for your help. ●

Addressing violations by John Howard Yoder Services of truth-telling and confession

To acknowledge the harm caused by the sexual violation of women by John Howard Yoder while he was a member of the AMBS faculty and to give AMBS opportunity to lament and apologize for its inadequate responses, AMBS invites alumni and former board members and employees to events on March 21–22.

The weekend begins with a reunion dinner and time for conversation on



Saturday evening. On Sunday, two services related to Yoder's harmful actions and the seminary's inadequate response are

planned, one for truth-telling by women and one for AMBS to apologize, lament and commit to fostering healing.

Women who wish to tell their stories are invited to be present to speak or to submit in advance what they wish to share. Women who cannot be present or want to remain anonymous may send their experiences—as a narrative, poem, image or drawing—to Rebecca Slough, AMBS

dean, by email, rslough@ambs.edu, or by mail, 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46517. She will follow up to find out how the experience might be shared.

More information is available on the AMBS website: www.ambs.edu/reunion-listening-confessing. Please take careful note of details about which events are open and which allow limited participation as well as about registering for the Saturday dinner.

The AMBS board and administration will cover costs for travel and lodging for Saturday and/or Sunday night for anyone victimized by Yoder who submits expenses either personally or through a friend. To request assistance for travel and lodging by or on behalf of women harmed by Yoder, contact president@ambs.edu or 574.296.6244. Documentation of expenses will be needed following the event.

A fund is being established by Mennonite Church USA to recompense at least in a small way some of the cost women who were harmed by Yoder undertook on their way to healing. If you wish to contribute to that fund, please visit the website address above as details are shared there. ●

Saturday, March 21

- 4:30 pm: Campus tour
- 6 pm: Dinner; registration required
- Conversation with current faculty
- 7:30 pm: Fireside chat with Sara Wenger Shenk, president

Sunday, March 22

- 9:30–11 or 11:30 am: **Honoring the Women's Truth:** An intimate gathering in which women will share their stories for AMBS representatives to hear.

- 2:30–4 pm: **Service of Lament, Confession and Commitment:** A worship service in which AMBS administrators and board members will apologize for the harm done while John Howard Yoder was a member of the faculty and the inadequate response by AMBS, and will commit to ongoing transparency and fostering healing.

AMBS

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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

AMBS NOTES

New admissions team leader

Daniel Grimes is the new director of enrollment and financial aid, beginning January 12. He brings extensive experience in administration from his work with Fresenius Medical Care, Everence and other organizations and boards.

Daniel fills the position most recently held by Jody Walker, who left AMBS in December. Other members of the admissions team are **Bob Rosa, Brenna Harker and Rhonda Yoder**.



Theological Lectureship



Gennifer Brooks, PhD, will present this year's Theological Lectureship, "Proclamation and the Margins: Preaching Justice in a Global World." She is a professor of preaching and homiletics at

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill. Her presentations will be March 17 and 18; they are open to the public at no charge. For more information, visit www.ambs.edu/news-events/Theological-Lectureship.cfm

Tour Egypt next January

Explore Egypt—the biblical narrative and what the church is currently facing—with Safwat Marzouk, assistant professor who grew up in Egypt, and Sara Wenger Shenk. In January 2016, Sara and Safwat will lead a MennoTravel tour, Encountering Egypt: Past and Present, with opportunities to visit sites and meet people for whom the country is home. For information, visit www.ambs.edu/EncounteringEgypt

Follow the Trail of Death

A summer course, available for credit or audit, will follow the Trail of Death, the path of Native Americans forced to leave Indiana and settle in Kansas. David B. Miller, AMBS professor, and several members of the Potawatomi Nation will lead the experience. For information, visit www.ambs.edu/academics/Trail-of-Death.cfm ●